

Gabb.]

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[Aug. 22,

793 Cabecar he visited us twice, and on neither occasion did he speak, except when spoken to, unless it was to make some remark, in very few words, and in a low tone of voice, to some of his attendants. His dress consisted of a white shirt, not over clean, a woven cotton breech-cloth, a bright-red handkerchief, tied in a roll around his head, and a magnificent necklace of four strands of large tiger's teeth. He sold me two of the strings for half-a-dollar, and I presented him with some trifles, among which was the rather suggestive article, a bar of soap. He accepted them without any acknowledgment. But then they don't know how to say, "thank you."

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793 Next in importance are the *Tau'-gurs*. These are the ordinary priests, and their duties are confined to officiating at the feast for the dead. Like the preceding, they are hereditary; only members of one or two families can become priests, and these seem to have all descended from a common ancestor. I have already described the performances of the *Tau'-gur* at the death-feast of Santiago, and there is nothing to add in that connection. Other feasts only differ in the less degree of profusion and the shorter time they occupy. But there is one circumstance of which I have said little, and that has always seemed to me mysterious. Unfortunately, from no want of effort on my part, I was not successful in investigating this more thoroughly. The songs of these priests are in a language, dialect, or jargon, whichever it may be called, in great part unintelligible to the uninitiated. Some words used are in the vernacular, but many of the nouns are peculiar. *Si-bu*, or God, has at least twenty names; many natural objects have names peculiar to the priests, and the difference is so great that not only I, with my imperfect knowledge of the language, but Mr. Lyon, who speaks it as well as an Indian, could not understand even the purport of the songs. These songs are taught by rote to the young candidates to the priesthood, and are always rehearsed by the priests apart, before being sung. I made several efforts to obtain a vocabulary, but in each case was defeated, rather by the want of understanding on the part of the priest, than from any unwillingness to impart what they knew. At last I made an agreement with the most intelligent and best informed of them. He was to visit me at a certain time and answer all my questions—for a consideration. But a severe attack of rheumatism prevented his coming and lost me the last chance. I have no theory to offer as to the origin of this singular fact. But two explanations however, seem possible. Either the whole thing is an invention, which I think hardly probable, or the system is an exotic, and the songs are in the original language of the missionary who introduced it. I can hardly express my regret at failing to obtain some clue to so interesting a problem.

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791 Finally come the *Awas*, sorcerers, or doctors. This is an open profession, and since it requires but little preparation, gives certain privileges and standing, and brings occasional emoluments, it is pretty numerously filled. The fellows are an arrant set of quacks, and I do not believe there is a single one who acts in good faith. Nevertheless, the people as a rule

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri

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THE BRIBRI

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using stools is an ancient one in Costa Rica, and that these seats seem to be but degenerate survivals of elaborately carved stone stools, such as those taken from the graves at Las Mercedes and Anita Grande. They may bear some relation to the *duhos* of the West Indies.



FIG. 2.—Wooden stool (length 13½ in.).

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The writer was fortunate enough to obtain some modern Bribri seats crudely hewn to represent tortoises (pl. iv), while one example had, instead of the usual legs, supports of wood carved in crudely rectangular figures (fig. 3) that recall the fine stone lattice-work found in the graves.

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